

Message Text

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12/14

ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7087

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0554

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y T E X T

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC MA US

SUBJECT: W/W REPPAS

BEGIN SUMMARY: MOFA HAS INFORMED US BY NOTE THAT REPPAS MUST RETURN TO PRISON. REPPAS REACTION SUGGEST STRONG POSSIBILITY HE MAY ATTEMPT ESCAPE, EMBASSY COUNTER-ARGUMENTS NOTWITHSTANDING. WE HAVE WARNED HIM EMBASSY MUST, FOR SAKE OF GENERAL RELATIONS, IMMEDIATELY ADVISE GOMR IN CASE OF DISAPPEARANCE FROM EMBASSY. EMBASSY WILL DELAY RETURN TO PRISON TO BEST OF ITS ABILITY, BUT MUST EVENTUALLY COMPLY IF NO ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENT POSSIBLE. WE BELIEVE NOW IS TIME FOR DEPT AND EMBASSY TO MAKE STRONG EFFORT TO SECURE LIBERTE CONDITIONNELLE FOR REPPAS.
END SUMMARY.

1. MOFA INFORMED EMBASSY MARCH 27 BY NOTE THAT REPPAS MUST, LIKE OTHER PRISONERS, RETURN TO PRISON. REPPAS DEEPLY DISAPPOINTED AND ONCE AGAIN SAID ESCAPE ATTEMPT WAS HIS BEST ALTERNATIVE. AFTER LENGTHY DISCUSSION WITH HIM BY EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO POINTED OUT CLEAR DANGERS AND GREAT ODDS AGAINST SUCCESS OF ESCAPE ATTEMPT, PLUS LIKELY CONSEQUENCES WHEN RECAPTURED, IF IN FACT HE WAS RECAPTURED WITHOUT BEING KILLED, EMBASSY STILL NOT CERTAIN HE HAS BEEN PERSUADED NOT TO MAKE ESCAPE ATTEMPT. EMBASSY OFFICERS TOLD REPPAS ALSO THAT EMBASSY WOULD HAVE
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TO ALERT GOMR AUTHORITIES IF HE DISAPPEARED. REPPAS DID REMAIN OVERNIGHT AT EMBASSY, HOWEVER.

2. EMBASSY SOUGHT ASSURANCE FROM SEC GEN MIN JUSTICE MARCH 27 THAT DECISION FOR REPPAS' RETURN WAS NOT TAKEN CASUALLY AT LOW LEVEL. SEC GEN INFORMED US DECISION WAS TAKEN BY MINISTER OF JUSTICE HIMSELF. EMBASSY OFFICER INQUIRED WHETHER NOTE WAS CORRECT IN STATING THAT REPPAS WAS TO RETURN TO CENTRAL PRISON SINCE OTHER FOREIGN PRISONERS HAD BEEN SENT TO MILITARY PRISON. EMBOFF ALSO ASKED WHETHER REPPAS COULD RETURN AFTER EASTER HOLIDAY. SEC GEN REFERRED EMBOFF TO DIRECTOR OF PENAL SERVICES WHO HAS NOT BEEN AVAILABLE OR RETURNED OUR CALLS. EMBASSY ALSO PLANS ASK DIRECTOR IF CHECK-IN PROCEDURE COULD BE INSTITUTED WITH HIM IN LIEU OF HAVING REPPAS RETURN TO PRISON. CHECK-IN PROCEDURES WERE TERMINATED MARCH 8, BUT REPPAS, UNLIKE OTHER PRISONERS (ACCORDING TO REPPAS) WAS PERMITTED TO RETAIN HIS CHECK-IN BOOK. EMBASSY IS SENDING NOTE TO MOFA MARCH 28 REQUESTING THAT THEY ARRANGE MEETING WITH DIRECTOR OF PENAL SERVICES OR HAVE HIM CONTACT EMBASSY. UNDER PRESENT SECURITY CONTROLS EMBOFF CANNOT ENTER MIN JUSTICE BUILDING WITHOUT SPECIAL PASS.

3. AS LONG AS EMBASSY CAN POSE VALID QUESTIONS WE BELIEVE WE CAN LEGITIMATELY DRAG OUR FEET IN RETURNING REPPAS TO PRISON. THE TACTICAL ADVANTAGE THAT ACCRUES FROM HAVING HIM AT EMBASSY, HOWEVER, WILL WORK TO INTENSIFY GOMR SUSPICIONS OF EMBASSY COMPLICITY SHOULD HE ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE. SHOULD HE ATTEMPT TO DO SO HE WILL DESTROY OUR LEGAL APPROACH TO SEEKING HIS RELEASE. IN ADDITION, ALTHOUGH SUSPICIONS WILL BE INTENSE IN ANY CASE, ESPECIALLY UNINFORMED PUBLR ONES, WE BELIEVE IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE IMMEDIATELY INFORM GOMR AUTHORITIES IF WE BECOME AWARE OF HIS DISAPPEARANCE TO PRESERVE OUR GOOD RELATIONS WITH KNOWLEDGE-ABLE AND COOPERATIVE GOMR OFFICIALS IN TERMS OF BASIC US INTERESTS IN MADAGASCAR. WE HAVE MADE ALL THESE POINTS TO REPPAS.

4. AMBASSADOR PLANS TO MAKE APPROACH TO MINJUS ON LIBERTE CONDITIONNELLE (LC) IN NEAR FUTURE; PRECISE TIMING REMAINS TO BE DETERMINED. DCM PLANS PARALLEL CALL ON DIPADV TO CONFIDENTIAL

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GENERAL ANDRIAMHAZO TO INSURE LATTER IS MADE AWARE OF OUR CONCERN FOR REPPAS. EMBASSY BELIEVES NOW IS OPTIMUM TIME FOR APPROACH ADVOCATING LC TO MALAGASY AMBASSADOR BY CONGRESSMAN MC CLOSKEY AND OTHER MEMBERS OF CALIFORNIA DELEGATION IF CONGRESSIONAL APPROACH NOT ALREADY MADE. DEPT MAY ALSO WISH TO RAISE REPPAS CASE AGAIN WITH MALAGASY AMBASSADOR. EMBASSY BELIEVES NOW IS TIME FOR "FULL-COURT

PRESS" ON LC SINCE IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO PERSUADE GOMR
THAT REMOVING REPPAS AS IRRITANT IN US-MALAGASY RELATIONS
NOW, WHEN PUBLIC ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON TRIALS OF REBELS
AND GOMR HAS ABSOLUTE CONTROL OF PRESS (PRIOR CENSORSHIP),
IS TO OUR MUTUAL ADVANTAGE.
MENDENHALL

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